1: Thurston & Rangachari E,G-4,5 (no date) 1909
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553 [574] A child receives its name on the seventh, ninth, or eleventh day. A sumptuous meal is given to the community, and the grandfather (paternal, if possible) milks a cow, and pours the milk into a brass cup placed in the milk-house. With it a little cooked sāmai grain is mixed. The babe is washed with water brought from a stream; marked on the forehead with sacred ashes; a turmeric-dyed thread is tied round its waist; a silver or iron bangle placed on its wrists; and a silver bead tied by a thread round its neck. Thus decorated, the infant is taken up by the oldest man of the village who is not a widower, who gives it a name, which has already been chosen. The elder, and the child's parents and grandparents then place a little milk in its mouth.

852 Children, both male and female, go through a shaving ceremony, usually when they are seven months old. The infant is seated in the lap of a Badaga, and, after water has been applied to its head by a Badaga or a barber, the maternal uncle removes some of the hair with a razor, and then hands it over to another Badaga or a barber to complete the operation.

763 Of the death rites as carried out by the Badaga subdivision, the following note was recorded during a visit to Kotagiri. When death is drawing near, a gold coin, called Vīrarāya hana or fanam, dipped in butter or ghī, is given to the dying man to swallow. If he is too far gone to be capable of swallowing, the coin is, according to Mr. Natesa Sastri, tied round the arm. But our informants told us that this is not done at the present day. "If," Mr. Gover writes,* "the tiny coin slips down, well. [775] He will need both gold and ghī, the one to sustain his strength in the dark journey to the river of death, the

* *Op. cit.*

other to see the guardian of the fairy-like bridge that spans the dreaded tide. If sense remains to the wretched man, he knows that now his death is nigh. Despair and the gold make recovery impossible, and there are none who have swallowed the Birianhana, and yet have lived. If insensibility or deathly weakness make it impossible for the coin to pass the thorax, it is carefully bound in cloth, and tied to the right arm, so that there may be nought to hinder the passage of a worthy soul into the regions of the blessed." The giving of the coin to the dying man is apparently an important item, and, in the Badaga folk-tales, a man on the point of death is made to ask for a Vīrarāya fanam. When life is extinct, the corpse is kept within the house until the erection of the funeral car (gudikattu) is completed. Though Gover states that the burning must not be delayed more than twenty-four hours, at the present day the Badagas postpone the funeral till all the near relations have assembled, even if this necessitates the keeping of the corpse for two or three days. Cremation may take place on any day, except Tuesday. News of a death is conveyed to distant hamlets (hattis) by a Toreya, who is paid a rupee for his services. On approaching a hamlet, he removes his turban, to signify the nature of his errand, and, standing on the side of a hill, yells out "Dho! Dho! who is in the hamlet"? Having imparted his news, he proceeds on his journey to the next hamlet. On the morning of the day fixed for the funeral, the corpse is taken on a charpoy or native cot to an open space, and a buffalo led thrice round it. The right hand of the corpse is then lifted up, and passed over the horns of the buffalo. A little milk is drawn, and poured into the mouth of the corpse. Prior to this ceremony, two or three buffaloes may be let loose, and one of them captured, after the

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343 841 837 amorous affairs. If a man wanted a particular girl he would note when she went to the menstrual hut, and would then persuade a female friend to stay in the hut with her and turn her fancy away from her husband and towards this unannounced suitor. A girl's parents or husband would therefore keep a careful watch on who else was in the hut. In a small hamlet, on the other hand, the female 343 841 population might be so little that a woman would often find herself alone in the hut. In that case she would be afraid to sleep there by 754 herself for fear of Kurumba sorcerers and ghosts. (This fear ran counter to the Badaga belief that Kurumbas themselves were afraid of 775 menstruating women, and hence would never enter the hut and secretly ravish or attack any menstruating woman through sorcery.) Because of this fear, a woman who was alone in the hut would persuade another who was due to menstruate in the next few days to tell her family the period had already begun, so that the two could sleep together in the hut. This ruse would not allow the second woman to spend extra time in the hut however, and she might well continue to menstruate after leaving it, but would keep the matter 841 secret. Sometimes a woman would be already pregnant when she 843 entered the hut for such purely social reasons. Since the number of weeks until she came to term might be calculated from the last 343 day a woman was in the hut, it therefore could happen that she gave birth in what seemed to be the eighth month of pregnancy.

841 517 When a group of women were together in the menstrual hut they could engage in a number of interesting activities. The only work they were permitted to do was to gather firewood for use there, prepare their own food, and wash their clothes (at a place separate from [304] the usual spot). It was generally while in the hut that an adolescent girl underwent tattooing. The only game the women played was [524] "eye-bean," an ancient Old World game which involved the redistribution of beans in a series of a dozen depressions. In general girls were not allowed to play this until they had their first pregnancy, but younger girls did play it too while in the menstrual hut.

841 415 264 [783] Cooking vessels kept in the hut were common to the whole village, and were in constant use. There was no need to destroy or even purify them after use, since everyone involved with them was in a state of pollution. Foodstuffs could be given to the women by their relatives, but it was taboo to give them cooked foods. No pot, basket or cloth would be taken to the hut with food, since it could not be taken back home afterwards. Thus when a woman in the hut was

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8 PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

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"While living he has no blessing of God; when dead he is not in heaven."

(Proverb)

Spirit Possession

121 8.1. Perhaps no aspects of Badaga therapy fit more clearly into an all-Indian pattern than do the phenomena surrounding possession and the exorcism of ghosts. Readers of the accounts available on North Indian (Lewis 1958: 295-99; Majumdar 1958: 234-36; Opler 1958; Freed and Freed 1964) and Central Indian spirit possession (Harper 1963) will at once recognize in the following pages many points of similarity. Adolescent girls cut off from their natal homes or unsettled by the requirements of adult sexuality are the ones who are especially prone to possession everywhere in India, and when older women also become possessed it seems that they too are feeling very insecure about their positions in the family. In what follows we 128 will discuss the predicament and the curing of a few such persons, and outline the Badaga theory of ghosts, without trying to translate our observations into Western psychological terms. An anthropological view of spirit possession must necessarily take account of the personal and social correlates of these attacks, rather than attempt to couch an analysis of the hysteria in an appropriate professional jargon.

●725 8.2. The Badaga theory of the soul is as reminiscent of Zoroastrianism as it is of Hindu belief. If following death the soul is judged to

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have done an excess of good deeds over bad it is destined for heaven, whereas if there is an excess of bad deeds over good it is consigned to hell. "If you live a good life you can wait and see the human world; when you die you can wait and see the heavenly world." Badagas do not believe in the further reincarnation of souls, for each soul suffers seven births, but only the seventh incarnation is in human form, the previous ones having been as animals. God assigns a soul to each person at birth, and writes on his brow the exact number of years he or she will live. Even God can sometimes be wrong, however, because an attack by a wild animal, a suicide, murder or some other calamity, may deprive the body of life before it was destined to die. In this dilemma the soul is obliged to remain on the face of the earth for the balance of time until the day when God had intended it to depart this life. In the words of another proverb: "While living he has no blessing of God; when dead he is not in heaven." In this way ghosts are to be found on the Nilgiri Hills, hovering just above the ground with their feet pointing backwards and making a frightening sound—sometimes a screech and sometimes a groan.

Ghosts in general continue to have ordinary human needs, which they seek to satisfy. One ghost told listeners during a seance that it had lived for a while in hollow trees, but it found this very uncomfortable. Mostly ghosts want to be inside people so that they will be safe, warm and well fed. When a ghost has been exorcised from somebody, it may therefore possess another person or else live inside an animal if it is not properly trapped. Further expression of the ghost's humanity comes in the seance, when it may ask for unusual foods, liquor, cigarettes or good clothing, as a pre-condition for its leaving the possessed person. Particularly the ghosts of young people, suicides because of their anxieties and frustrations, may ask for the things they could not enjoy while alive, and will demand extra singing and dancing during the seance too.

Some Badagas are possessed by non-Badaga ghosts, in which case a ghost may speak through the victim's mouth in Toda, Malayalam, English or some other language not in fact known to the possessed person! Interpreters are sometimes brought in to help with such an exorcism.

Despite their widespread belief in ghosts, Badagas are initially skeptical of a person's claim to be possessed. They will therefore begin a seance by a questioning period to see if the ghost is "genui-

nely" there. It is recognized that a girl may feign possession, perhaps to gain attention, perhaps to rush off wildly into the woods followed by a young man intent on taking care of her desires while there.

Ghosts are ultimately driven out either by throwing the host person bodily into a river, or by inducing the ghost into a lock of her hair, which is then cut off and either nailed to a tree or corked carefully into a bottle and buried away from the village so that it cannot escape again. The following cases offer a fair range of Badaga exorcism practices.

8.3. CASE 1. In 1962 a boy, aged 18, failed the S.S.L.C. examination and committed suicide by hanging himself. He did this because he had told all his friends he would certainly pass, and so could not face them.

Another man and his 16-year-old wife slept in a separate house from that of the man's parents. One night when they were on the way to this house the ghost of the suicide entered the girl. He was not related to her, but was in a distant "sister's husband" relationship to her husband. A month after the ghost got into her, it became active.

In May 1963, the ghost was driven out by a Badaga exorcist from another village. He is reputed to know spells strong enough to kill people, and some strong enough to remove curses laid on by other magicians. In the present case, once the ghost became active in the girl, she went into a trance and claimed to be this person or that; always a male, though. It was because the people thought she was feigning possession and would not believe her that her husband brought the exorcist. At the first seance he told her she was bluffing; and so then while in a trance she identified some of the people present, even though she was newly married to this village and might not have known everyone there. After that the people believed she had a ghost, and the ghost "started telling the truth."

Every night for a week the exorcist held a seance with her, for which he came from his village especially. A crowd of some 50 or 60 villagers, including the girl's close relatives, was always present. These people came because it is the customary thing to do, rather than because they were curious. During the seance they sang folksongs, but not hymns; and on the last day they were thanked for coming and singing. The exorcist gets little for his work: on the last evening he is usually given a loincloth and a cloak. Each seance began around 2200 hrs., and lasted for two or three hours. It was

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always in the husband's house. First the exorcist would draw a chalk pattern each evening, and the girl would sit in front of this. The villagers present would begin to sing; and then suddenly the girl would get up and start dancing. She performed no recognizable dance-step, but simply jumped around the room. On the first night the ghost revealed his true identity through her mouth. Then the exorcist asked the ghost why he was troubling the girl; and the ghost replied that he was still young, and had anxieties and needs. He then explained to them what he wanted. He had never had a chance to drink arrack (see 2.6) while he was alive; so now he wanted arrack, cigarettes and some food. Then the relatives asked the exorcist to remove the ghost. The man first said some spells, and the villagers sang. They were not able to understand his spells, although they were in Badagu, for he always muttered them under his breath. This process of chalk pattern, singing, dancing and spells went on at every seance.

The final seance also began at 2200 hrs., and after the pattern was drawn and the initial spell uttered, the girl was given arrack to drink, smoked some cigarettes and ate some food. After this the ghost bade farewell to his friends, and regretted having committed suicide. Then the exorcist took her off towards the highest hill, to a point more than a kilometer from the village though still within its boundaries. This was selected as being a distant place to which people would seldom go. A group of some 20 youths accompanied the pair all the way to the final place, singing as they went. Once they reached this point, the girl fainted and fell down. No medicine or water was given to her; but the youths watched as the man said spells over her. After that the girl got up of her own accord. When they were leaving the house, the ghost had promised that he would make some sound as a sign that he had left the girl's body: now he was heard to whistle from a point a few hundred meters away from where these people stood. Next the exorcist cut a piece of hair from the girl's head. He tied it to a nail and pushed this into the ground. Then he did some *pu:ja* to it, whereby the power of his spell was transferred to the nail. The belief is that the ghost cannot cross the iron nail.

In returning to the house the party took a different route. Once they reached there the exorcist entered the house first, and then stood on the door-step and threw cold water over the girl before she entered. This was to test whether the ghost had really left her.

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Apparently it had; for were this not so the girl would have started dancing again. Since that time the ghost has given no further trouble.

8. 4. CASE 2. Lakshmanan's best friend was Lingan, an age-mate who lived in the same village. In 1951 Lingan studied very hard for the S. S. L. C. examination, but was the only one in his group who failed. Very dejected, he burnt all his school transcripts and notes while on the way home; and soon after entering his house, when his mother went out, he hanged himself from a rafter. A neighbouring old lady happened to come in and found Lingan hanging there: she came out shouting, and then Lakshmanan and some others rushed in. Lakshmanan lifted Lingan up while another person cut the rope. They sent for a doctor, but by the time he arrived the boy was dead.

Lingan's neighbour was Lakshmanan's cousin, an adolescent girl whom Lingan had been fond of. Shortly after his suicide Lingan possessed her; and when Lakshmanan came home for the college vacation in 1952 he went to see the girl who was supposedly possessed. She grabbed Lakshmanan by the arm, and the spirit in her spoke through her mouth, using her voice. The ghost, in talking to Lakshmanan, did not say it was Lingan, and Lakshmanan disbelieved it anyway. Then Lakshamanan and the ghost began to talk about certain secrets that supposedly only the two of them had known about. One thing was that they used to go out of the village together to smoke; so now Lakshmanan said, "How about a smoke?" The ghost agreed and asked for some Scissors cigarettes, Lingan's favourite brand. Lakshmanan gave a cigarette to the girl, who supposedly had never smoked, and told the ghost to smoke it as he used to. The girl then went through Lingan's special routine of taking a match from the box and lighting it, using one hand only, and then once the cigarette was lit blowing numerous smoke rings.

By now Lakshmanan felt that the spirit must be Lingan, and the ghost then admitted that he was. The ghost proved his identity by saying the complete Gettysburg Address in English. This was something the two boys had studied for the S. S. L. C. ; yet the girl, who mouthed it perfectly, herself spoke little Tamil and no English at all, for she was illiterate! Lakshmanan then said, "How about the other things we learnt for the S.S.L.C.?" The ghost then continued with all of Tennyson's "Daffodils" and Sarojini Naidu's poem "Bangle Seller," in good English.

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It was decided that a Badaga priest in the village would exorcise the spirit. Usually, as in this case, the ghost is told it is going to be exorcised, and is then allowed some time to think over what things it wants. The ghost gives a list of its favourite things—food, clothes, books, etc.—and these are all brought for it from the market. In this village, after the spells have been said, the possessed person is taken to a place on the road outside the Mission Bungalow, where there is a large rock; and the ditch there used to be very deep. All the things needed by the spirit are thrown in this ditch, and nobody ever takes them away. Many are even afraid to look at the things. No matter how valuable the goods, even beggars know that they belong to a ghost. It is at this point in the exorcism that people do whatever else the spirit requests, such as dancing or singing. The spirit is then induced into a hair of the possessed. That hair is next cut off and put into a bottle that has previously been chosen by the spirit, and into which a nail is also placed. The hair is fixed tight in the neck of the bottle when the cork is jammed in, and then the part of the hair still protruding from the neck is cut off. The exorcist holds the bottle up and without shaking it, watches the nail constantly jiggling up and down. This movement of the nail is the test to check that the spirit really is in the bottle. The possessed person immediately becomes normal. Finally, the bottle and the loose piece of hair that has been cut from its neck are thrown into whatever place the spirit has previously chosen.

This was the process used in the exorcism of Lingan's ghost. Lakshmanan, the informant, witnessed it all because early in the exorcism the ghost had insisted that Lakshmanan accompany him to the end.

8.5. CASE 3. A Badaga in one village was a very powerful exorcist; but although he had learnt the art no one knew about it. One night a Tamil was busy exorcising a ghost in that village, when the ghost told him, "You are only a beginner, you can't drive me out. Only the man outside can drive me away."

The Tamilian looked out and only saw a local Badaga man; so he doubted the ghost's word, but checked with it again and then brought the Badaga inside. This man then told the Tamilian that the latter was only a raw recruit; that he should be content with the Rs 6-4 he had already earned, and should not come to the hamlet again to exorcise.

Then the Badaga got the story from the ghost. Its name had been

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Karuppu, and it was from the city of Tiruchirapalli. It had come up from the Plains on a rice lorry, and then wandered around until it got inside a girl. The ghost said it was doing no harm, and wanted to stay there; but the Badaga insisted that it should leave. The ghost asked if it could stay with the exorcist until it could be put on a lorry going to the Plains. Then the Badaga thought to ask the ghost to check how many other ghosts were in this same village. The possessed girl sat quietly for two minutes while the ghost went round the village. Each girl in the hamlet who had a ghost then jumped up and started dancing. Meanwhile the ghost reported back to the exorcist that there were five other ghosts. He replied, "Bring them here." Then the five possessed girls of their own accord all left their homes at the same time and came to that house in a state of possession. It was night-time. The Badaga drove all of the ghosts out, but kept Karuppu knotted in a handkerchief in his pocket until later he got a chance to throw the handkerchief on a lorry going down to the Plains. After that all of the possessed girls were normal again.

On another occasion a man in that village had to go home late at night, and was afraid of meeting ghosts. This same exorcist therefore gave him three stones to carry, telling him that as long as he held them the ghosts could not possess him. Later, on the way home, he was followed by a female ghost. She came right up to his house with him, although he threatened her all the way. After entering his door the man threw the three stones at her and she disappeared.

8.6. CASE 4. A middle-aged woman appeared to be possessed by a ghost: she had the signs of its being in her for nearly a year. An exorcist meanwhile came to the village as a therapist to try and cure another sick girl. As he was not successful people thought that girl had a ghost in her. They therefore held a seance at which many women were present, among them this middle-aged women. During the exorcism the patient showed no signs of a ghost, but the older woman did. The exorcist then said a spell and "stopped" the ghost in the woman. He told her that there was a ghost in her; he had caught if for the moment, but she must prepare to have it finally removed one day. From that time until the final exorcism there was no other sign of ghost or sickness in this woman. Her own husband said that she had had a ghost in her for the last five years; yet after the final exorcism he decided it was not a ghost at all but "something wrong inside."

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wrong inside."

This woman had in fact married three or four husbands in the proper manner, and divorced each in turn. She then ran away with a young man. After three months she left this man, became a Christian, served in a local Church, then was transferred to Bangalore and left the Church. She was not heard of for five or six years and then turned up one day in her natal village with a small boy. She said she had married a Tamilian in Bangalore who was now outside the village and was afraid to come in. Somebody went to bring him while the woman begged her relative not to say that she had ever been married before or had become a Christian. To this, he agreed. The three of them finally settled in a small town.

Generally a man exorcising a ghost makes a chalk pattern, and puts flowers and incense on it. In the exorcism of this woman, however, this was not done. She sat in a chair during the session, which lasted from 0745 to 0900 hrs., facing a table on which was a large picture of Murugan (Subramaniam) and some other small ones too. The exorcist sat on another chair beside her. On the table were a lime fruit, some camphor and also a plate with raw yellow rice and sacred ash on it. Ash marks were also on the four corners of her seat.

To start with the man told the ghost: "You promised the other day that when we made *pu:ja* you would go away. Now you say you aren't going." The ghost then said it would go away about 0800 hrs. At about 0815 hrs. the ghost was still arguing with the exorcist that it was not yet 0800 hrs. Then it said it would leave, but first the man must give it a picture of the Tamil god Murugan. The exorcist gave the picture to the woman. Then the ghost said it would break the glass; the man replied, "Take all the frame, too." "No, it's my will and pleasure," replied the ghost. And so the man and the ghost argued on. There were some signs that the lady was not really possessed. When her *sa:ri* fell down at the front, she put it back up on her shoulder. Had she really been possessed, she probably would not have known that it had fallen, I was told. At another point the man took a stick and threatened to hit her if the ghost would not leave her. The woman replied: "See, my brothers are here to protect me." This also suggests she was not really in a trance. At another time when the man threatened her she came over to an aunt, dragged her up, and then sat down in her place beside another relative and said to him: "See, he wants to hit me, and you aren't

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saying anything." The man remained quiet. Then the exorcist rubbed his hand around the plate of rice, and while staring at the woman said some spells. Next he told her to come back to her own seat, and she did. Then he again told the ghost it was past 0800 hrs. and the ghost had not yet left. It replied that it would go if it were given music, hymn-singing and a picture of Murugan. Then, on a relative's suggestion, the proceedings were postponed. That evening they held a *pu:ja* in one of the houses, with this same exorcist in charge. He gave a small religious picture to the ghost, and it went away—if indeed it was ever there!

Other Mental Disturbances

8.7. Cases of insanity are rarely observed in Badaga villages, not because of their infrequency but because the victims are usually killed off by their relatives with an over-dose of opium hidden in some food. In 1970 a madman hobbled with chains could however be seen in one village, but this was very unusual. Insanity is thought to be caused by a demoness, *Ka:teri pe:* who possesses a man, takes his food from him, will not leave him, and ultimately brings exhaustion by not letting him rest properly.

8.8. Witchcraft accusations are common in many parts of India (Epstein 1959), but among the Badagas this kind of paranoid behaviour does not occur *within* the community. Witchcraft is nonetheless present, but it is only the Kurumba and Irula sorcerers and occasional Todas (Rivers 1906: 262; Francis 1908: 144) whom Badagas accuse of it. This displacement of anxiety onto members of another tribe probably helps reduce it effectively. In one recent case a newly married man was apparently experiencing sexual frustrations with his wife: at any rate, he claimed that very often as he slept with his wife at night in a room off the veranda a Kurumba came, separated the two, and built a low brick wall in the bed between them. Such a thing could occur, it was believed, because the Kurumbas had the power to open a bolted door from the outside. The only known way to curtail a Kurumba's powers is to either knock out one of his teeth or cut off his hair (and probably burn it). Important in the containment of witchcraft is the fact that each cluster of Badaga villages appoints a Kurumba sorcerer to protect those Badagas from the sorcery of his fellow tribesmen. His concern for the welfare of his Badaga hosts is expressed symbolically by the key role he plays

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of visitors might, on the other hand, cause heart failure in the sick person. The headman who sends the invitation to other villages merely directs it to other headmen, and does not stipulate how many visitors are expected. The party coming from each hamlet is organized by someone there related to the dying person; usually a male. These visitors may bring milk or other gifts when they come, and have to be fed by the family of the sick person during their visit. There is an element of bidding farewell to the dying, which is often expressed by Badagas with the belief that nobody should be alone when he dies. At night-time, therefore, the lamp must remain alight and all of the villagers sit up singing songs or listening to the radio. This event is known as *no:ka:patu*, "watching the sick." It could continue for as long as several months of a terminal illness, although with a reduced number of participants after the first few nights (Mörike 1857: 60).

Badagas believe no one should die beyond the boundaries of his village. In recent times the hold of this custom has been such that one hears of patients dangerously ill in a hospital whose relatives insist on bringing them home to die, a decision which certainly kills some people who might otherwise have hope of recovery. Nevertheless one former headman said that after a discussion about whether to bring a dying woman from the hospital, he was recently able to prevail with the argument that a life is more precious than any custom, and that to bring the woman home before she had either got better or died was tantamount to murder, since the monsoon weather would surely finish her off in the hamlet.

Shortly before death occurs a 25-paise coin (1/4 rupee, but originally a small gold coin of another value) must be dipped in clarified butter and given to the dying person, who should try to swallow it. This rite of *hana benne* ("coin butter") is done even for children and those dying in hospitals, as it is thought that a person cannot get to heaven without this coin to pay for the food, drink and tolls on his journey there, and the butter will give him strength for it (Gover 1871: 66; Tignous 1911: 119). That some people choke on the coin seems very likely, and instances of a person recovering after swallowing the coin are numerous enough that today only a small minority still follow this custom. As a less acceptable alternative, the buttered coin may be inserted in the mouth after death, or else wrapped in a cloth and tied to the dying man's arm (Grigg 1880: 227; Natesa Sastri 1892: 833; Schmidt 1894: 257).

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763 428 795 Although the Badagas do not write wills, a dying man may make a benefactory statement, each wish in it being called a *sa:la* ("debt"). It is believed that if these wishes are not followed the spirit of the dead man will trouble some of his relatives. It does not possess the wrongdoer as a ghost but puts a curse on him. Since Badagas do not believe in a further reimcarnation the spirit of the dead man will be able to go to heaven if he has done enough good deeds in this life. If his dying wishes are not followed, however, he will have to remain in limbo (*eḍe lo:ka*, "the middle place"). This dismal prospect should weigh heavily on his relatives.

763 764 In Badaga belief a person does not die when he gives out his last breath, but rather when he takes in his last breath. This breath is believed to remain in his body for the next ten days, and enables the corpse to hear and be aware of everything that is going on around it, even though the dead person cannot open the eyes, speak, or move. Thus people commonly speak to a corpse during 764 the funeral. For most Badaga phratries this ceremony involves cremation one or two days later, on ground several hundred meters [615] outside the hamlet. Lingayats and children are instead buried at that place, and nowadays poor widows of various phratries may have to be buried because cremation has become quite costly (Noble and Noble 1965).

762 9.6. Suicide is by no means uncommon among the Badagas, particularly among young married women, and it is most usually accomplished by swallowing opium. Failing that, the juice from oleander

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Table 4. Death per thousand of the entire Rural Population of the Nilgiri Plateau, 1921-1930

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	Cholera	Small-pox	Plague	Fever	Dysentery/ Diarhoea	Other Causes	Total 1,000 People
Rural Coonoor taluk (1921-25)	0.20	0.30	0.10	10.20	6.10	9.40	26.40
Ditto (1926-30)	0.01	0.08	0.05	11.47	5.81	10.90	28.32
Rural Ootacamund taluk (1921-25)	0.80	0.50	0.30	21.90	4.60	10.90	38.30
Ditto (1926-30)	0.03	0.14	0.24	16.50	4.96	11.30	33.17

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or ear-rings, then her husband will die. If anyone dreams of a male buffalo, there will soon be a death in the village, probably among the dreamer's relatives (since Ya:ma, the Hindu god of death, comes riding on a buffalo). If one dreams of a woman approaching in a red *sa:ri*, this means a contagious disease will soon affect his house, his relatives or his village, usually through the disease-bearing goddess. Sometimes a person dreams of a woman in a red *sa:ri* leaving the village where there is an epidemic: this means the infection will now end.

Causation of Disease

10.17. The Badagas neither recognize any particular god as responsible for creating or curing all diseases, nor consider any one single health factor to cause all illness. As we have already seen, only a few of the diseases that Badagas cure are known by them to have a specific cause. Nevertheless we will briefly review here the variety of causes that therapists can cite.

(*a*) There are five diseases that are visited upon people by a goddess : these we have treated in detail above (7.1-7.6). A similar kind of causation was recognized for "Big Wind," where a bad spirit or deity was believed to have flicked a corner of its invisible clothing against the patient's body. Infertility in a woman is ultimately the will of God, although its immediate cause may in some instances be the failure of the couple to love each other sufficiently. Aside from these instances, however, the Badagas do not consider other chronic illnesses or bodily deformities to be inflicted by the gods : they are rather viewed as the effect of unknown sins committed by the victims themselves in previous incarnations. The will of a god and the effect of one's own or one's ancestors' sins cannot altogether be separated, however. If a person gets smallpox, for example, it means that he has done something impure; and in curing him the therapist must pray to Ma:riamma, the smallpox goddess, to forgive the patient's sins. In this way the curing process pleases the goddess and she may therefore oblige by doing what is required of her.

(*b*) Mental illness is caused by a bad spirit or bad ghost getting into the body. It is believed, on the other hand, that a person can become strong and healthy if a good ghost enters him, for it will help his body to grow.

776 dismount. He should not urinate in a stream, either; nor should he stand up while
779 urinating on the earth, for this shows disrespect to the earth goddess. He should
782 always squat down to urinate or defecate, and for fear of disrespect the buttocks
(514) should not be directed toward the sun at this time. But apart from such minor regulations for personal conduct the gods of nature receive little attention, except when the water-goddess has not brought rain in time. Then the villagers will say prayers and make offerings at one of their temples in an attempt to get the favor of a rainfall.

The fourth category of supernatural beings is the ghost. This is the wan-
• 775 dering spirit of a person who chanced to die before he was destined to, and it
779 frequently gets inside a living person to find warmth and food. The malicious
(789) ghosts can cause a lot of trouble, but there is no use in worshipping them. When a ghost becomes bothersome it is exorcised by a man noted for this art, who gives it whatever material requirements it may (through the mouth of the possessed person) demand. Ghosts cannot usually act as intermediaries between men and gods; but there is a special category who become angels. These are dead people who have done good during their lives, but who for some reason want to return to this
(828) world rather than be merged with god. While they are waiting to be reborn to a
(787) higher social status they act as the messengers of god, and come to people in their dreams to warn them of impending disasters.

The fifth category of supernatural beings is the demon, who is periodically
776 propitiated with a blood sacrifice or some liquor. This is a being who is incapable
779 of doing good, but may do harm if he chooses. He is thought capable of killing
782 people that he meets at night, and of obstructing various projects. There are no temples to the demon, but there are recognized places in the fields where offerings are left for him, just as there are recognized places for leaving things that

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539 which may be freely translated thus:—'This is the death of Śevani (a Baḍaga female). In memory of her, Jannige the she-calf of the buffalo Bannige is given in donation to atone for her sins. She goes now in a car from this mortal world to the great world (heaven). All the one hundred sins committed by the ancestors of this person, committed by the ancestors of the ancestors of this person, all the sins committed by this person herself, *viz.*, not giving of cooked rice as food to the son in distress, the not giving of fire to the neighbour, the sin of having pointed out the wilderness, and so led into difficulty the son who wanted to know the way, the sin of having ruined brothers and sisters, the sin of having taken away others' property and houses, the pouring of water on a blazing fire—may all these one hundred sins be washed away by this person coming in contact with the gold pillar[1] and by her rubbing herself against the silver pillar.[1] May the door of the house of Karma (Fate) be shut up against this person. May the door of the house of Dharma (Meritoriousness) be open to this person. May the devils and other evil beings cease their mischief to this person. May the Milapâla thread become tight to enable the soul of this one to walk over it and reach the heavens. May the door of the world of happiness (Sagga-Svarga) be open to this person. May this person become resplendent with beauty, by taking hold of the feet of that Brahma,[2] and by taking hold of the feet of this Basava[2]. May this one reach the holy presence of Śiva.' All say 'May it be so.—Amen'.

764 Let us suppose that the burial ground is reached, and that the Baḍaga in the case before us belongs to a caste that is accustomed to bury its dead. The eldest of the agnatic kindred fixes a crowbar on the south side of the corpse. All the other Baḍagas now join him in digging a big oblong pit to contain the dead body. The body is then taken round this pit and is placed in it with its face turned [824] towards the north. Four twigs of the Apâmârga (Tamil Nâyuruvi—*Achyranthes aspera*) are planted at the four corners of this oblong [291] pit. A lighted lamp made of cowdung and filled with oil is placed [572] beside the head of the corpse and threads are passed diagonally

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[975] [1] Gold and silver pillars are supposed to exist in the other world and the soul of the dead by coming in contact with these is believed to wash away all its sins.

[776] [2] Gods in whom the Baḍagas believe in this world. Basava is regularly worshipped. Śiva is the highest god in their mythology and through the worship of Brahma and Basava they reach him in the end.